



music | by Belinda Bruce

Songs, Stories & a Cup of Joe

Performing in front of a crowd can be a roller coaster ride of nerves and unexpected stomach drops. Or it can be an exhilarating rush. A receptive and non-competitive audience is the key to a rewarding experience. Whether your wish is to present a song, a poem, a story, a non-fiction or a spoken word piece, the North Shore now has two open mike nights where you can strut your stuff in a friendly and enthusiastic environment. The locus of these two creative forums is the Bean Around the World coffee shop on Mt. Seymour Parkway.

Standing Room Only

"This is a brand new venue. My lead singer and I went last night and really enjoyed it. Most of the people there came to listen and not perform. It's put on by Deep Cove Music, and Tyler deftly manages a great mix of jammers and songwriters. Rory (the owner) is a genial and generous guy with a real wish to bring more live music to the North Shore."

—The Psychic Cowboy

Tyler Pearson is no stranger to jumpstarting creative forums. Employing his business acumen and talents as a songwriter, guitar player, singer, actor and film director, Pearson has been at the forefront of North Shore culture since the late 1990s. He opened Deep Cove Music (DCM) in 1997 with goals to open a studio and

Canadian Idol, eat your heart out. It's Tuesday night and Deep Cove's Bean Around the World is thronged with budding musicians and music lovers. The all-age crowd sips coffee and tea, their eyes and ears trained on a few local luminaries clamouring around a couple of microphones. Brainchild of Deep Cove Music owner Tyler Pearson, the open stage at the Bean got off to a hopping start in November and it's been standing room only ever since.

"It was my idea to support our student and clientele base with a venue to perform and experience live music," says Pearson.

produce artists, live performances, videos and eventually feature films. Shortly after opening the music store, he started Musart Cultural Society to run a series of spring break and summer camps in music and acting. He organizes the free *Cates Park Concert Series* throughout July and August for original songwriters and bands, as well as *Deep Cove Daze*, a community festival that has been host to some stellar acts including Grapes of Wrath, Juno-award winning Holly McNarland and John Mann of Spirit of the West.

Bean owner Rory O'Connell says the open stage is something he had wanted to do ever since the coffee shop opened. "It's great to be able to provide a venue for local musicians that serves no alcohol. Especially to give high school students a place to play. You don't even need to bring an instrument, just your voice. I'm blown away by the talent that exists in the neighbourhood." And of course, it's been a boon for business.

Two alumni of Pearson's music school help host the open stage and perform in the house band. "Tyler Quarles was one of my first students at DCM in ninety-seven, when he was eleven years old," explains Pearson. "He's grown into a fantastic bass/guitar/singer-songwriter/snowboarder extraordinaire! Chris Reimer was a student of mine who also played guitar, piano and now

focuses on the drums." Both 19-year-olds are currently enrolled in Capilano College.

The house band opens the night with a couple of tunes and then turns over the stage to whoever signs up. It's first come, first served. "Sometimes the house band jams along with singer-songwriters and sometimes we just sit back and watch all the great talent." Pearson expresses his amazement at the clientele: "Especially some of the local high school students who seem to be extraordinarily talented." The band comes back for the last half hour with a host of cover songs and originals and special guests sometimes join in for a few songs. Local resident and professional singer/guitarist John Lyon performs on a regular basis. His presence is instructive. "It's great," says Pearson, "because he's schooling the rest of us with his vast knowledge of R&B, blues, folk, rock and jazz."

Dare to be heard

Shelley Harrison Rae has made a life of writing and guiding other writers to find their voice and develop their craft. Currently the President of the North Shore Writers (NSWA) Association, Rae holds firm to the belief that every life tells a story; her passion is people and the stories they have to tell. The award-winning writer, editor and workshop leader felt that the time had come for the North Shore writing community to find a venue to share their work.

Rae approached a few North Shore venues and couldn't have been more pleased when Bean owner Rory O'Connell expressed his eagerness. The Bean oozes friendliness and is the perfect setting for a gathering of writers. "It's a cozy environment with a fireplace in the heart of Deep Cove," says Rae.

O'Connell and his business partner Nina Schmidt were happy to provide writers with a space. O'Connell says, "We see it as fifties-style coffee house. And some of our staff are writers so they love it, too."

One of the main principles in Rae's writing workshops is the concept of artistic nurturing: *Share your words and ideas within a non-critical, nurturing*

environment. "In my workshops, I tell writers that writing has less to do with writing itself and more with giving yourself permission to write. The open mike is intended to be a place where people engage that permission. And the focus is not so much on performing as it is on sharing work."

But gentle encouragement must be balanced by some level of bravado. Bring on the brew! Writers need to challenge themselves and overcome their timidity, too. For this reason Rae calls her open mike "Dare to be Heard!", a phrase culled from the wisdom of Suzanne Falter-Barns in *How Much Joy Can You Stand*: "The days of public stoning are long over. Daring to be heard, ultimately is something great you do for yourself. It's giving your poor, withered soul some fresh air and sunshine. It becomes your chance to fly."

Many NSWA members participated in the first open mike in January. Writers read from their work and networked; Shelley read a piece to the close the evening. Participants are encouraged to sell their novels, chapbooks, poetry volumes, short fiction or non-fiction works, what-have-you. As the open mike develops, Rae plans to bring in special guests to read and discuss craft. She hopes to draw people from all across the North Shore (or anywhere), including students from Capilano College, to share a story or poem and give feedback to their peers. "There is no other venue like this on the North Shore," says Rae and laughs. "The goal is to attract more people than we scare away."

No cover charge. Bring your songs and/or ears to the Open Mike at Bean Around the World at 3734 Mt. Seymour Parkway, Tuesdays from 7-10pm.

***Dare to be Heard!* happens the first Monday of every month from 7:30-10pm at Bean Around the World at 3734 Mt. Seymour Parkway.**

